



State of New Jersey

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Commissioner

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NJDOC Commissioner: Drug-detection Equipment Is Effective

In the aftermath of the November 28 State Appeals Court ruling that the policy of using Ionscan drug-detection scanners and specially trained dogs to detect narcotics on visitors to state prisons is constitutional, the Commissioner of the New Jersey Department of Corrections released statistics underscoring the effectiveness of the scanners.

According to Commissioner Jack Terhune, there have been 25 arrests for possession of controlled dangerous substance (CDS) and 50 seizures of CDS since the Ionscan equipment was introduced 19 months ago. In addition, the Commissioner added, there have been 57 seizures of narcotics contraband (i.e., crack pipes, rolling papers, etc.) in that time period.

“Clearly, this equipment has had a significant effect in reducing the flow of illicit drugs to inmates for use or distribution,” Commissioner Terhune said. “The utilization of the Ionscan, in tandem with the Department’s ‘Zero Tolerance’ drug policy, provides one of the most proactive and effective approaches to correctional substance abuse problems to be found in any correction system in the nation.

“It has always been my position that the presence of illicit drugs poses a serious threat to the security of our correctional facilities,” he continued. “We are striving to maintain the safest possible environment for the community, our staff and the inmates.”

Ionscan equipment, which is able to detect up to 15 separate narcotics simultaneously, is used to check the hands and pockets of visitors the NJDOC facilities. The mechanism can detect up to one billionth of a gram of narcotics. The scanner is able to provide a response to the operator within six to eight seconds. If drugs are detected, a specially trained dog is utilized to determine if the person is in possession of additional narcotics.

Two correction officers and a dog are used to conduct spot checks of visitors at each of the Department of Corrections’ 14 state prisons as well as their satellite units.

(more)

Following the November 28 State Appeals Court ruling, Judge David S. Baime, explained the decision on behalf of a three-judge panel. Baime wrote, in part, that “prisoners and visitors all profit by heightened security because they make correctional institutions safer for all concerned.”

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The mission of the New Jersey Department of Corrections is to ensure that all persons committed to the state correctional institutions are confined with the level of custody necessary to protect the public and are provided with the care, discipline, training and treatment needed to prepare them for reintegration into the community.

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